



# Restoring Accountability with Commonsense Budget Reform

*H.R. 853 Modernizes Yearly Budget Process*

9 May 2000

---

The Comprehensive Budget Process Reform Act reflects a broad, bipartisan desire for a more straightforward budget process. It is designed to provide integrity to budgetary decisions and strengthen accountability of federal spending. Below are some highlights:

## Budget Resolution with the Force of Law

- < Changes the current non-binding concurrent budget resolution to a **joint budget resolution**, which is signed by the President and has the force of law.
- < In the case of a presidential veto, HR 853 provides for the approval of a concurrent budget resolution under expedited procedures.
- < Replaces the 20 obscure budget functions with **total** spending and revenue levels.
- < Subdivides total spending into the following categories: discretionary (with a distinction between defense and non-defense), mandatory, emergencies, and interest.

## Budgeting for Emergencies

- < Requires the President and Congress to set aside a **reserve fund for emergencies**.
- < Defines an “emergency” as meeting both of the following criteria: 1) funding for “loss of life or property, or a threat to national security”; and, 2) an “unanticipated” situation, meaning it is sudden, urgent, unforeseen, and temporary.
- < Stipulates that the amount in the reserve fund must initially be equal to the 5-year historical average of emergency spending.
- < Funding would be released only for those bills that meet the emergency criteria.

## Enforcement of Budgetary Priorities

- < Closes an existing loophole that exempts certain legislation from budgetary enforcement rules.
- < Requires each bill report to include a statement from the Budget Committee determining whether the bill complies with the budget resolution.
- < Requires the Congressional Budget Office to score all conference reports (except tax bills scored by the Joint Committee on Taxation).

## Accountability for Federal Spending

- < Repeals a House rule that allows increases in debt limit without approval.
- < Requires all authorizing committees to submit schedules for reauthorizing all Federal programs within a period of ten years.
- < Establishes a procedure to subject proposed new entitlements to yearly appropriations.
- < Prohibits the consideration of legislation that authorizes new Federal programs unless the authorization (or spending authority) is limited to a period of 10 or fewer years.

## Budgeting for Long-term Obligations

- < For the first time, HR 853 requires both the President and Congress to budget for future liabilities of Federal insurance programs; this applies to all Federal insurance programs other than Social Security, Federal retirement programs, and medical insurance programs.

## Other Provisions

- < **Baselines:** Requires the president's budget submissions, Congressional budget resolutions, and CBO cost estimates be compared with *prior year spending levels*.
- < **Byrd Rule:** Curtails the Senate's ability to strip out of reconciliation bills, under the so-called Byrd rule, House-originated provisions intended to reduce spending.